

Fostering Writing Across the Curriculum 'A school-based Action Research Project'

Dr Brad Merrick (Director of Research in Learning)
Mrs Michele Studd (Head of Learning Support)



Literacy in the middle school classroom



Literacy in the middle school classroom – some research

- Yr 7 students were expected to work more independently than Yr 6 students... They were given less support and guidance.
- Yr 6 students wrote more pieces of extended writing.
- Yr 7 students wrote more 'short answer pieces'

Literacy in transition (Cairney et al)



Literacy in the middle school classroom - Considerations

- 'A writer's brain is like a magician's hat. If you're going to get anything out of it, you have to put something in first' L'Amour, 1990
- Each KLA has its own form of curriculum literacy and its own way of viewing the world
- Great care needs to be taken when selecting literacy strategies, because the inappropriate selection of strategies can detract from learning experiences.



Middle School students and literacy

- It is critical that middle & secondary school teachers recognise the diversity of language development of their students... Literacy for adolescents means that nothing should be taken for granted.
- For students mastering a KLA means mastering its specific literacies.

Curriculum corporation



Our boys as literacy teachers

On structure

- Teach writing structures – this is the most important part.
- Put useful hints for writing structures on the board.
- Show them the structures for different text types.
- Discuss good ways to plan out a story.

On practice and feedback

- Practice, practice, practice.
- Give individual comments on a student's work and show them how to improve it.
- Constantly encourage them
- Peer feedback to help students improve



On teacher PD

Teachers generally want professional development that:

- Is classroom-based, strategy-oriented and practical.
- Is provided by experts and/or other teachers to directly support their current needs.
- Involves learning from others' experience through networking, visiting and observing.

Students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms (Anthony Shaddock, Loretta Giorcelli, Sue Smith)



Activity

- Working with a colleague, discuss the issues you see with the development of writing skills and literacy in your subject area.
- What are the areas of focus that you would like to see developed and think would have an impact in your current teaching environment?

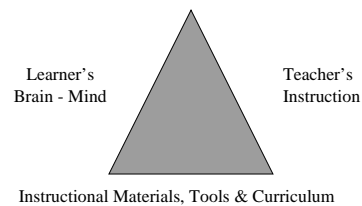


Background to this Research

- A need to better understand what motivates our boys to write;
- A need to understand their degree of skill, knowledge and confidence in relation to the process of writing, across a range of curriculum areas?
- We are using a form of 'Action Research' in the Junior & Middle School which feeds the findings back into the Teaching and Learning process at the school.



The Learning Triangle



The Learning Triangle – Berninger, Stage, Smith & Hilderbrand, 2001.



Developing an Understanding of the Writing Process

“Equally important to fostering a climate conducive to writing and sharing is ensuring that all students understand the complexity of the writing process. Many students hold the naïve view that professional authors complete their publish pieces after composing one draft and doing some minor revisions.” (Graham, MacArthur & Fitzgerald, p.33, 2007)



What can we do as Teachers?

Teachers must demystify the writing process for students, By teaching them that regardless how skilled they become, ... all students will need to utilise a process, adapted to their needs, in order to develop manuscripts.

They will go through several stages of revision, they will seek the responses of others and continually edit and revise their work, eventually realising that writing is never perfect and always open to revision.

As the French poet Valery stated
“ A poem is never complete; it is just abandoned”.



Approach

- Through the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, it allowed us to best represent and interpret the 'writing of our boys' across the Middle School.
- We also investigated the same items with Year 6 students to see if there are any major differences in the transition from JS to MS.

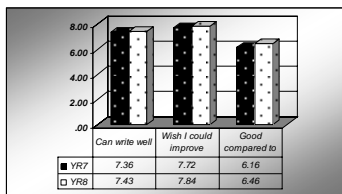


Types of item included

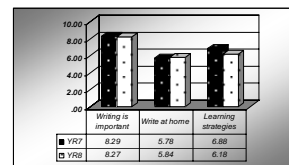
- Rating scales (using a 0%, 10%, 20%, ... confidence scale across a range of items that made reference to their writing confidence, self-efficacy and their use of strategies.
- Also various items that allowed them to reflect upon, and list their favourite topic areas to write about combined with their own perception of how they would 'teach writing for a day'



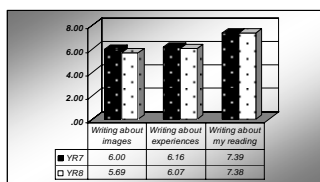
Their confidence and perceptions



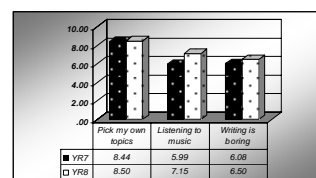
Importance, at home and strategies



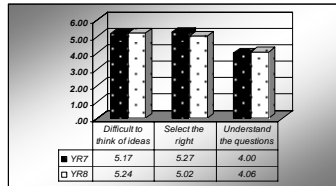
Images, Experiences and Reading



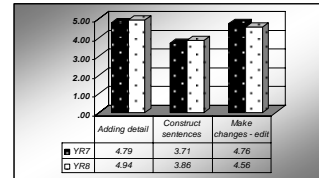
Topics, Music and Boredom



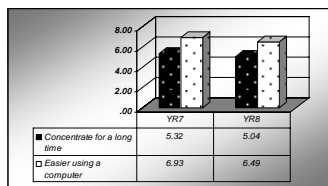
Thinking, Selecting and Understanding



Detail, Sentences and Editing



Their Concentration & Use of Computers



Areas that they like to write about?

Adventure	Crime stories	Fact and fiction
School	Childhood	Adventure
History	Images	Sport
Books fiction	Comics	Sport
Scotering	Made up Adventures	Skateboarding
My pets	My friends	My suburb
Action	Adventure	Mystery
Motorbikes	Movies	Holidays
The future	Technology	Computer games



What would they like help with?

- If I was a teacher I think I would first teach structures of writings as this is one of the most important parts of writing and because I found this skill very helpful
- I would give them all a thesaurus each to read and teach them techniques on how to structure their writing.
- Make them write about something that they enjoy and get them to use sentence structure, paragraphs, etc.
- Telling the how to plan things and write the stages out then practice it.



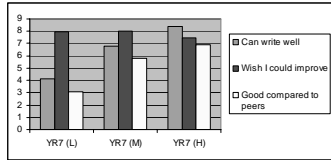
So what is the data suggesting?

- We need to examine the confidence and belief systems of the students (as well as grades and effort)
- Confidence and self-efficacy is driven by motivation (both intrinsic and extrinsic!)
- We need to be explicit in what and how teach!

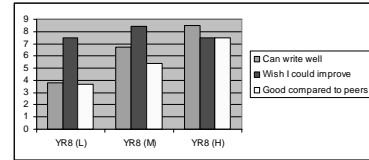


FACTORS THAT HAVE AN INFLUENCE ON THEIR WRITING

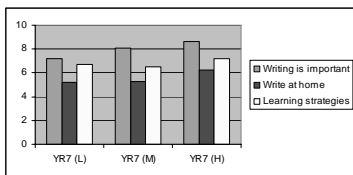
I can write well, wish I could improve & I am quite good compared to my peers – Yr7



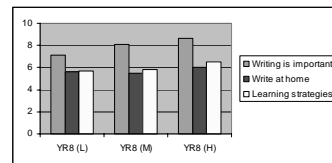
I can write well, wish I could improve & I am quite good compared to my peers – Yr8



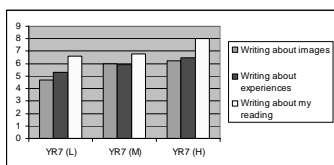
Importance, home & strategies – Year 7



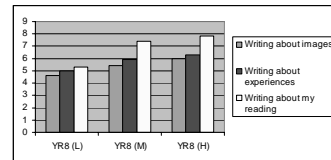
Importance, home & strategies – Yr 8



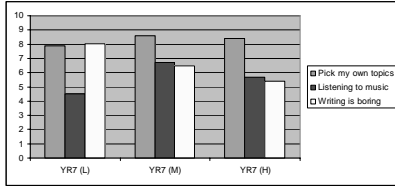
Images, experiences and their reading – Yr 7



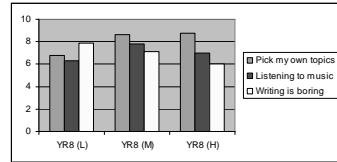
Images, experiences and their reading – Yr8



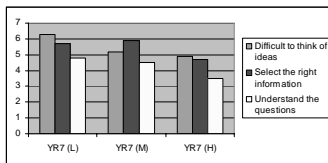
Topics, listening to music and finding writing boring – Yr 7



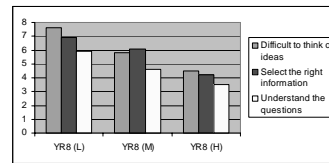
Topics, listening to music and finding writing boring – Yr 8



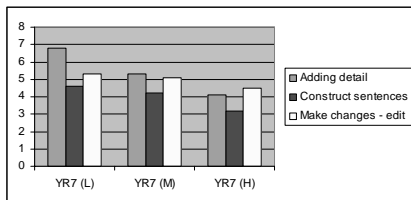
Ideas, Information & Questions – Yr7



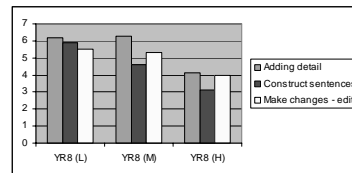
Ideas, Information & Questions – Yr 8



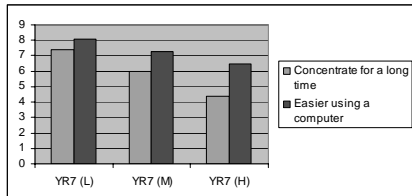
Detail, Sentences and Editing – Yr 7



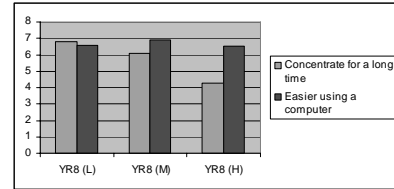
Detail, Sentences and Editing – Yr8



Concentration & Using a computer – Yr7



Concentration & Using a computer – Yr 8



Some strategies that may help!

Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve **Writing** of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools

<http://www.carnegie.org/literacy/pdf/writingnext.pdf>



Thanks

- Questions, comments, suggestions please?
- Please feel free to contact us on the following emails below

MStudd@barker.nsw.edu.au
or
BMerrick@barker.nsw.edu.au

